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DECK THE HALLS

When you think of Christmas gifts you naturally think of Marlboro cigarettes, leading seller in flip-top box in all fifty states—and if we annex Wales, in all fifty-one—and if we annex Lapland, in all fifty-two. (This talk about annexing Wales and Lapland is, incidentally, not just idle speculation. Great Britain wants to trade Wales to the United States for a desert. Great Britain needs a desert desperately on account of the tourist trade. Tourists are always coming up to the Prime Minister or the Lord Privy Seal, or the Thane of Glamis, or like that and saying, "I'm not knocking your country, mind you. It's very quaint and picturesque, etc., what with Buckingham Palace and Bovril and Scotland Yard, etc., but where's your desert?") Before I forget, let me point out that Scotland Yard, Britain's plain-clothes police branch, was named after Wally Scotland and Fred Yard who invented plain clothes. The American plain-clothes force is called the F.B.I. after Frank B. Incheliff, who invented fingerprints. Before Mr. Incheliff's invention, everybody's fingers were absolutely glassy smooth. This, as you may imagine, played hob with the identification of newborn babies in hospitals. From 1791 until 1904 no American parent ever brought home the right baby from the hospital. This later became known as the Black Tom Explosion.

(But I digress. England, I was saying, wants to trade Wales for a desert. Sweden wants to trade Lapland for Frank B. Incheliff. The reason is that Swedes to this day still don't have fingerprints. As a result, identification of babies in Swedish hospitals is so haphazard that Swedes flatly refuse to bring their babies home. There are, at present, nearly a half-billion unclaimed babies in Swedish hospitals—some of them well over eighty years old.)

But I digress. Marlboro is, of course, an ideal Christmas gift for your friends and loved ones who enjoy filter cigarettes. If, on the other hand, your friends and loved ones like mildness but don't like filters, then you can't go wrong with a carton of Philip Morris. If your friends and loved ones like a subtly mentholated cigarette that combines refreshing taste with high filtration, then buy a carton of Alpines. (Alpines, incidentally, are named after the late Albert G. Pine. Al Pine worked all his life to invent a cigarette that would combine light menthol and high filtration, but alas he never succeeded. As by-products of his research he did manage to invent the atom, the gooseneck lamp and the cocker spaniel, but the lightly mentholated high filtration cigarette, alas, never. Now this dream is realized, and what could be more fitting than to pay tribute to this gallant man by calling this cigarette Alpine?)

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We, the makers of Marlboro, Philip Morris and Alpine are now enjoying our sixth year with Max Shulman. Obviously, we think he is a funny fellow. We think you'll think so too, if you look at his television series "THE MANY LOVES OF DOBIE GILLIS"—and read his latest book, "I WAS A TEEN-AGE DWARF."

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